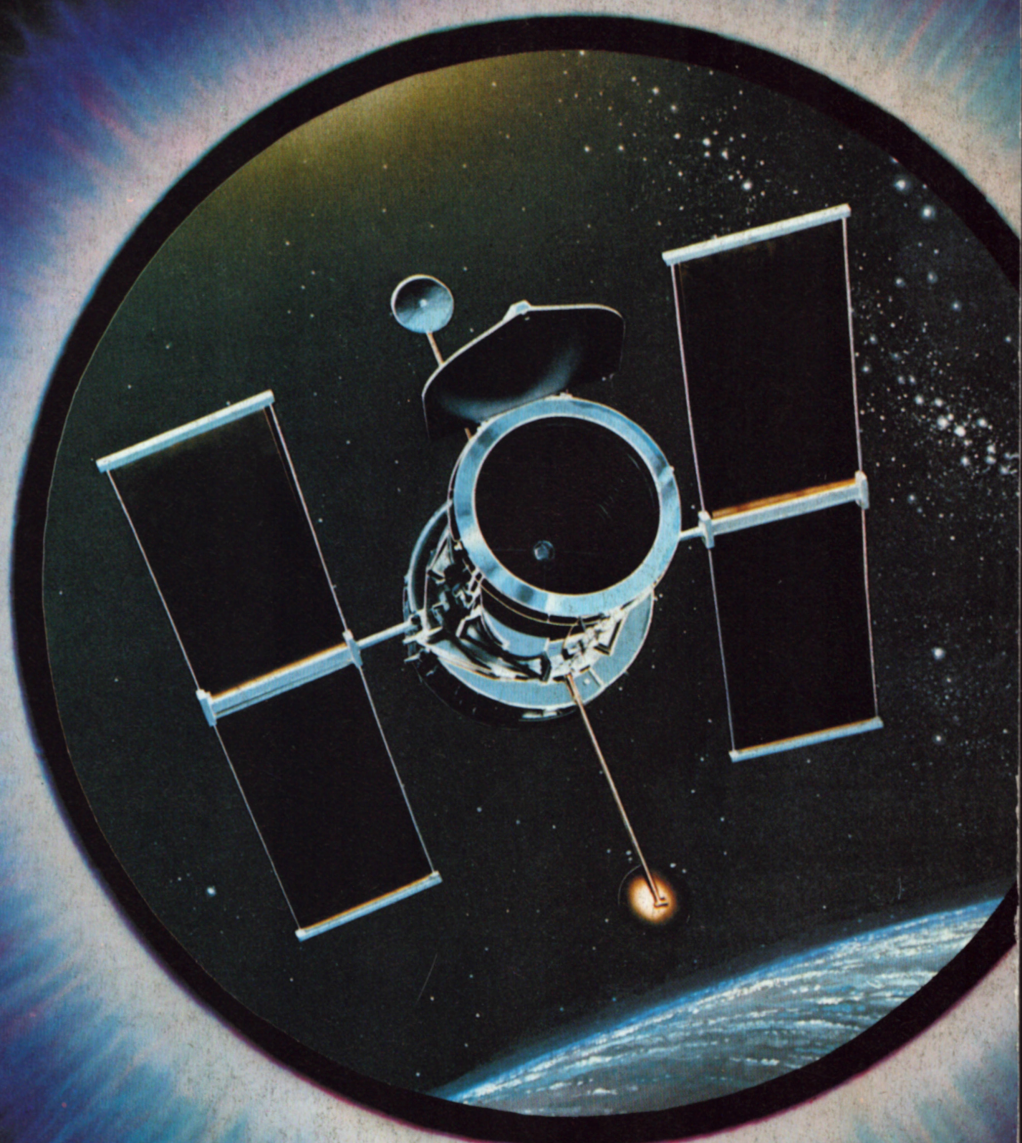
65p

THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

Search for ETI
Miracles of the Virgin
Regression: the facts
Great Lakes Triangle
The Ripper murders

131



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THE Unexplained
MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

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In next week's issue

A new series on **Solectrics** examines an English seaman's theory that earthquakes, tempests and other natural disasters can be predicted using astronomy. Continuing **Hypnosis**, we explore the question of whether hypnotic subjects relate true experiences of past lives or voice subconscious fantasies simply to please the hypnotist. We offer a reappraisal of the achievements of the clairvoyant crimebuster **Gerard Croiset**: is his international reputation justified? How would you cope with a message from outer space? **Extra-terrestrial intelligence** gives tips on communicating with alien species. And, ending on a sinister note, **Ripper murders** investigates the possibility that Jack the Ripper may have been Madame Blavatsky, founder of the Theosophical Society.

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Plumbing the depths

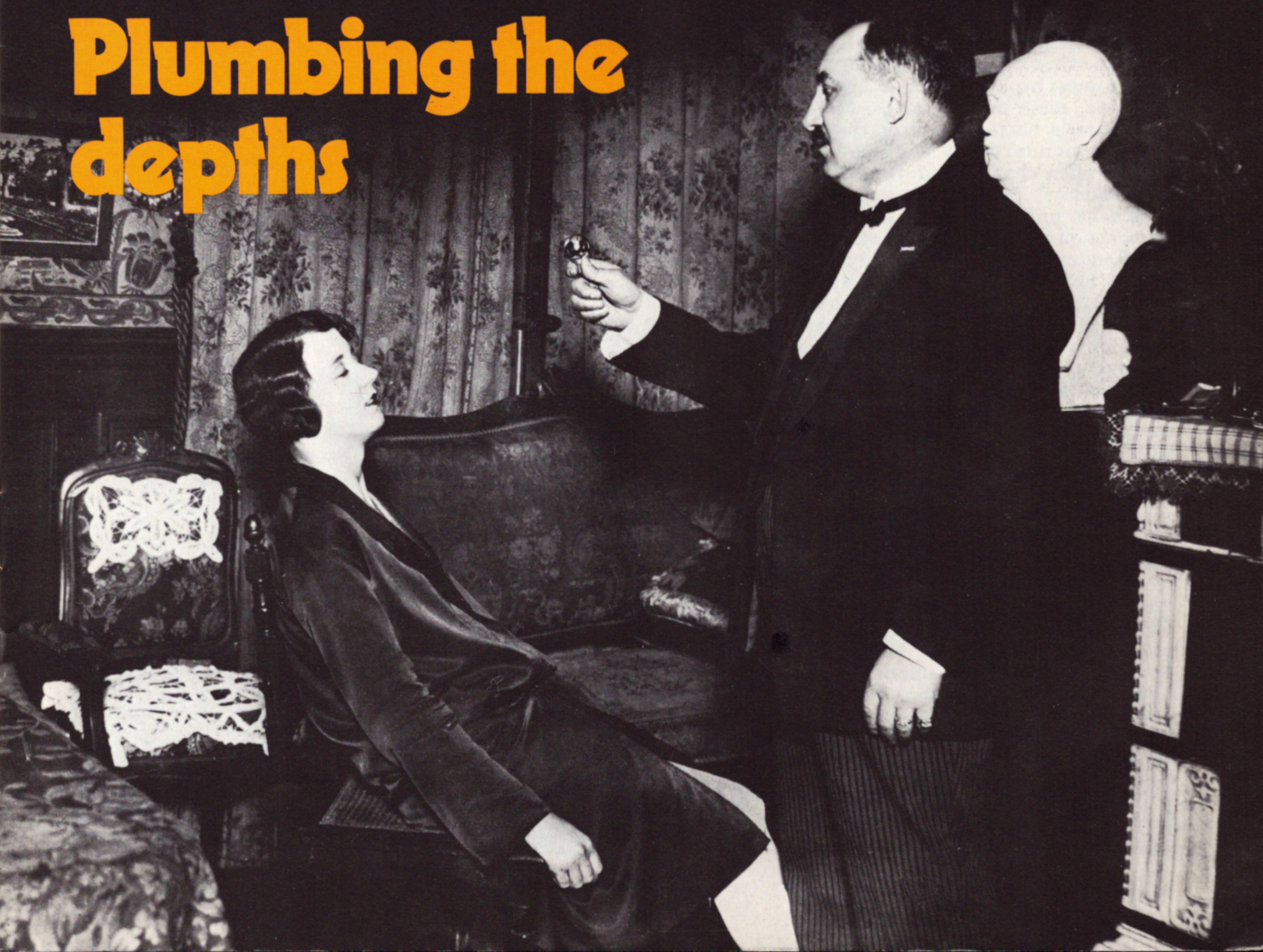
Many people have a fantastic ability to discuss their past lives in vivid detail – but all too often it turns out that they are merely reciting something they once read or heard. MELVIN HARRIS investigates

THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND can be regarded as a vast, muddled storehouse of information. This information comes from books, newspapers, magazines, from lectures, television and radio, from direct observation, and from overheard scraps of conversation. In normal circumstances most of this knowledge is not subject to recall, but there are times when some of these deeply buried memories are spontaneously revived. And some of these revived memories re-emerge as baffling examples of cryptomnesia: memories whose origin has been completely forgotten.

As a result, the material can sometimes seem to have no ancestry and can be mistaken for something newly discovered or created. The late Helen Keller, blind, deaf and mute from infancy, was tragically deceived by such a cryptomnesic caprice. In 1892 she wrote a charming tale called *The frost king*. It was published and applauded, but within a few months it was revealed that the piece was simply a modified version of Margaret Canby's story *The frost fairies*, published 29 years earlier. Helen had no conscious memory of ever having heard the story, but it was established that a friend had read a batch of Miss Canby's stories to her in 1888 – and *The frost fairies* was among them. Helen Keller was devastated. She wrote:

> Joy deserted my heart . . . I had disgraced myself . . . yet how could it possibly have happened? I racked my brain until I was weary to recall anything about the frost that I had read before I wrote *The frost king*; but I could remember nothing.

In the same fashion a number of cases of automatic writings – allegedly from discarnate spirits – have been traced to published works. For example, the famous 'Oscar Wilde' scripts, produced by two psychics in the 1920s, were gradually shown to be derived from many printed sources, including Wilde's own *De profundis* and *The decay of lying*. One of the writers of the automatic scripts, Dr S. G. Soal, was led to remark: 'The variety of sources from which the script is drawn is as amazing as the adroitness with which the knowledge is worked up into



Hypnotic regression was fashionable in the earlier years of the century. The subject went into a sleep-like state and revealed information that he had acquired when younger but that had since been lost to his conscious mind

In the 1920s two psychics claimed that they had been used by Oscar Wilde (left) for transmitting new literary pieces. Later investigation suggested that these examples of automatic writing were actually rearrangements of passages from his other works

sentences conveying impressions of the different mannerisms of Wilde's literary style.' This is a significant verdict indeed, for very often the cryptomnesic material emerges not in a pure form, but in an edited, or paraphrased version. And this may mislead investigators in search of the primary sources.

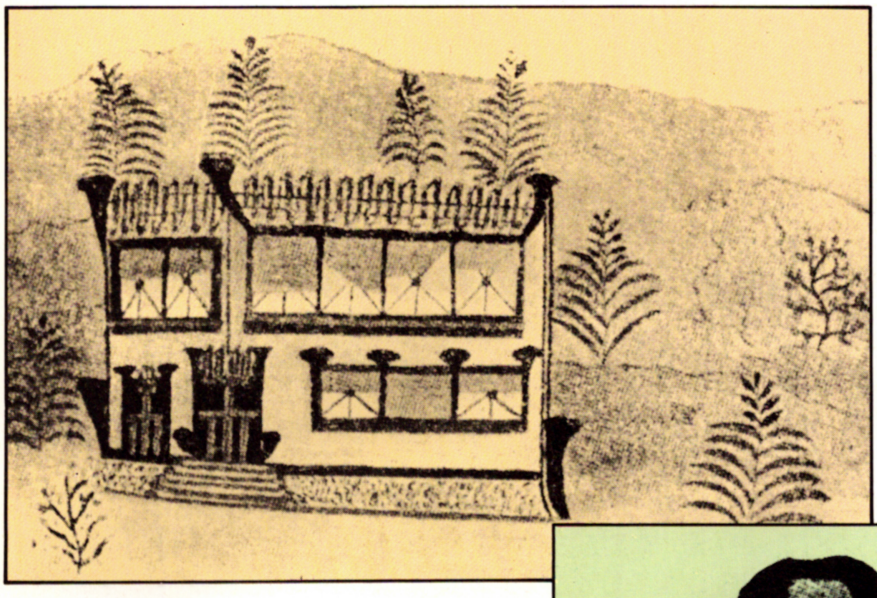
Such unconscious plagiarisms are certainly intriguing, but most baffling of all are surely the vivid memories of 'past lives' that emerge under hypnosis or trance conditions. To some, these have always smacked of cryptomnesia, but to many others this explanation seems ruled out by the great wealth of detail – often obscure – provided by such 'regressionists'. Here the use of tape recorders has proved invaluable. Before their introduction all such research was costly and time-consuming, since everything the subject said had to be taken down in shorthand – with the inevitable loss of any accents, nuances and subtleties in the voice. Sound tapes, by contrast, provide lively and more convincing case records than any of those furnished by the pioneer researchers. Even so, there are two classic cases from the turn of the century that still command respect. The most famous involved the Swiss medium known as Hélène Smith.

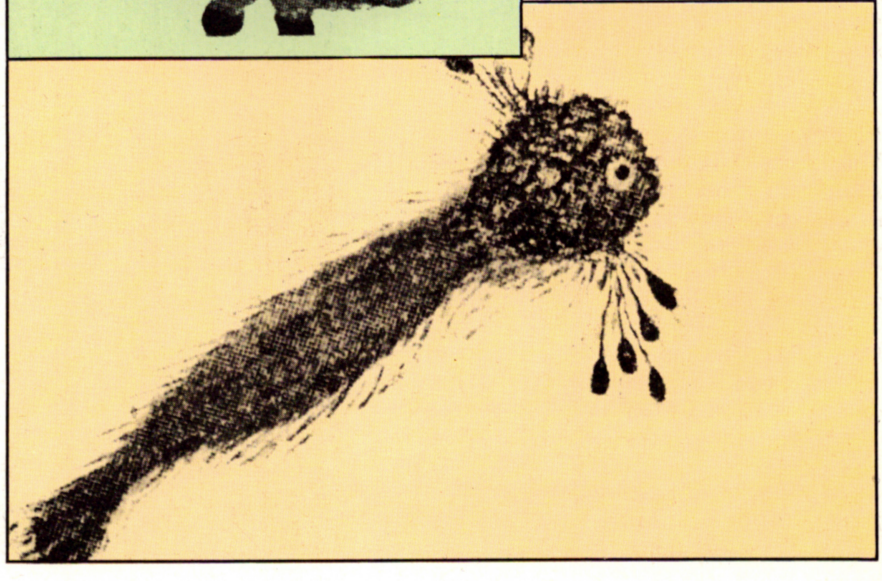
Hélène was investigated by Theodore Flournoy, professor of psychology at Geneva University. His major findings were published in his *From India to the planet Mars*. He records that Hélène laid claim to a previous existence as the ill-fated Marie-Antoinette. She also claimed a much earlier reincarnation as the wife of the Hindu prince Sivrouka Nayaka, a 15th-century ruler of Kanara. Her Indian memories were enriched with descriptions of ceremonies and palaces, but complicated by her insistence that Flournoy had also been present in Kanara – as her husband!

Later research seemed to show that Hélène's obscure Indian knowledge was drawn from an inaccurate history by De Marles, published in 1823, but she '. . . dug down to the very bottom of her memories without discovering the slightest traces of this work'. However, the real proof of her ability to resurrect and restructure unconscious knowledge came with her most extravagant romance – one involving contact with the inhabitants of Mars.

During her Martian episode she produced a small album of exotic drawings of Martian landscapes, houses, people and plants. But these were all typically childish fantasies with superficial oriental touches. Much more impressive was the emergence of a spoken and written Martian language. Yet an analysis of 'Martian' showed that the sounds were those of the French language; the order of words was absolutely the same as in French; while its crude grammar was simply a parody of French grammar. The vocabulary alone was her invention. Even so, the whole affair

Below: a self-portrait by Hélène Smith (left) with her guardian angel





Swiss medium Hélène Smith claimed to have contacted Martians: she drew one of them, Astané (left), his house (above left), and his 'ugly beast' (below), whose body is covered with pink hair, and who has a black head and a green eye

involved a remarkable feat of construction and memory, for Hélène was always consistent in her use of the 'Martian' words on different occasions. And all this was apparently the work of her subconscious.

Although not everyone was satisfied by Flournoy's explanation of the Hélène Smith case, the Blanche Poynings case of 1906 was neatly solved within a few months.

Blanche Poynings was a woman who had lived during the reign of Richard II. Ostensibly she began in 1906 to communicate through a clergyman's daughter, known as Miss C., while she was under hypnosis. Blanche had been a friend of the Countess of Salisbury and proved to be a garrulous gossip. She poured out details of the Countess's affairs, correctly naming her two husbands, children, in-laws and retainers. She also chatted about her own four marriages and her time at court.

A rich, detailed account

Everyday events were not neglected either, for Blanche tattled away about the fashions: 'Men wore shoes with long points which were chained to their knees. They had long hair cut straight across the forehead.' And she '. . . used to wear brocaded velvet, trimmed with ermine, and a high-peaked cap of miniver'. Among other tit-bits was mention of the three types of bread eaten by the different classes, namely simmel, wastel and cotchet. In all, she provided a rich and convincing account of life in the late 14th century. By contrast, Miss C. claimed to know nothing at all of this period.

These sessions greatly puzzled Lowes Dickinson of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). He followed up all the statements of names, relationships and events and to his surprise was able, in almost every case, to verify the truth of Blanche's assertions. This simply increased his puzzlement, for 'some of the facts given were not such as even a student of the period would naturally come across.' Blanche Poynings, for instance, was a relatively unimportant figure, merely referred to by two chroniclers as one of the Queen's attendants. So he concluded that the most likely explanation was that the facts were drawn from an historical novel. But Miss C. could recall reading only one novel set in that period: *John Standish*. But this work did not contain the material found in the Poynings messages.

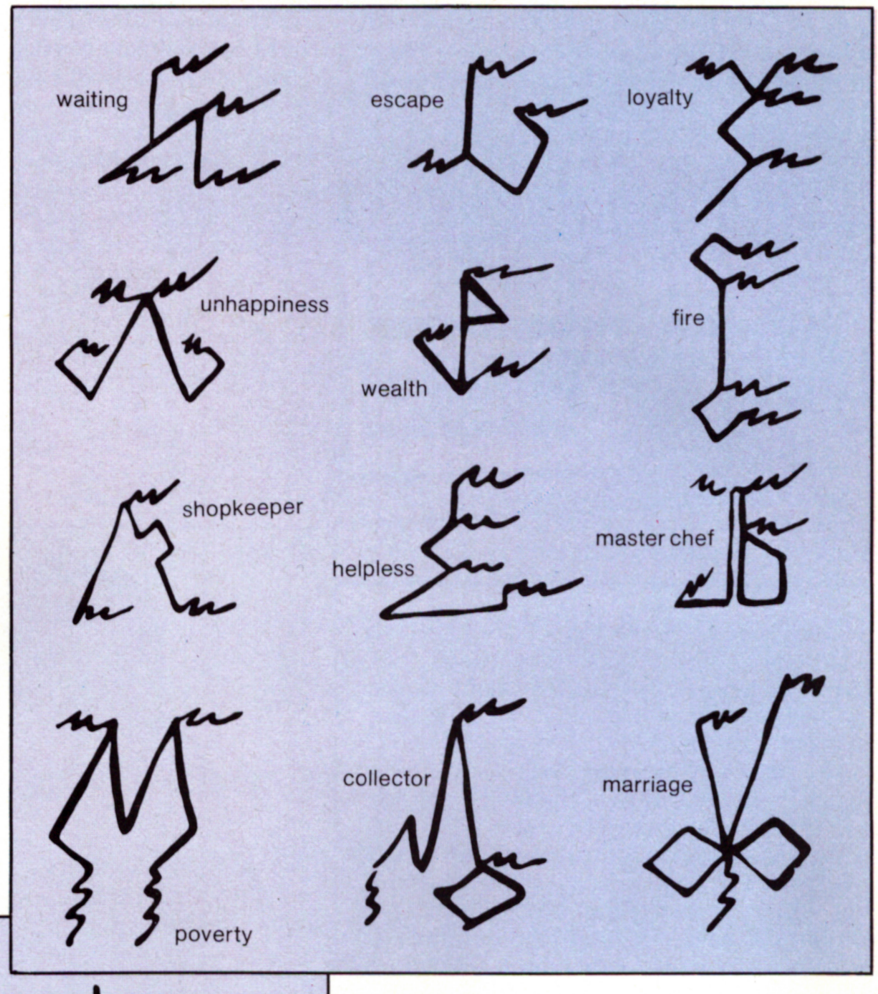
Further research by Lowes Dickinson only increased his bewilderment. More and more facts came to light that confirmed Blanche's story, but some were drawn from such obscure genealogical data that he began to feel that they would never have been incorporated in a novel. For a while he came to 'think it possible that Miss C. was really

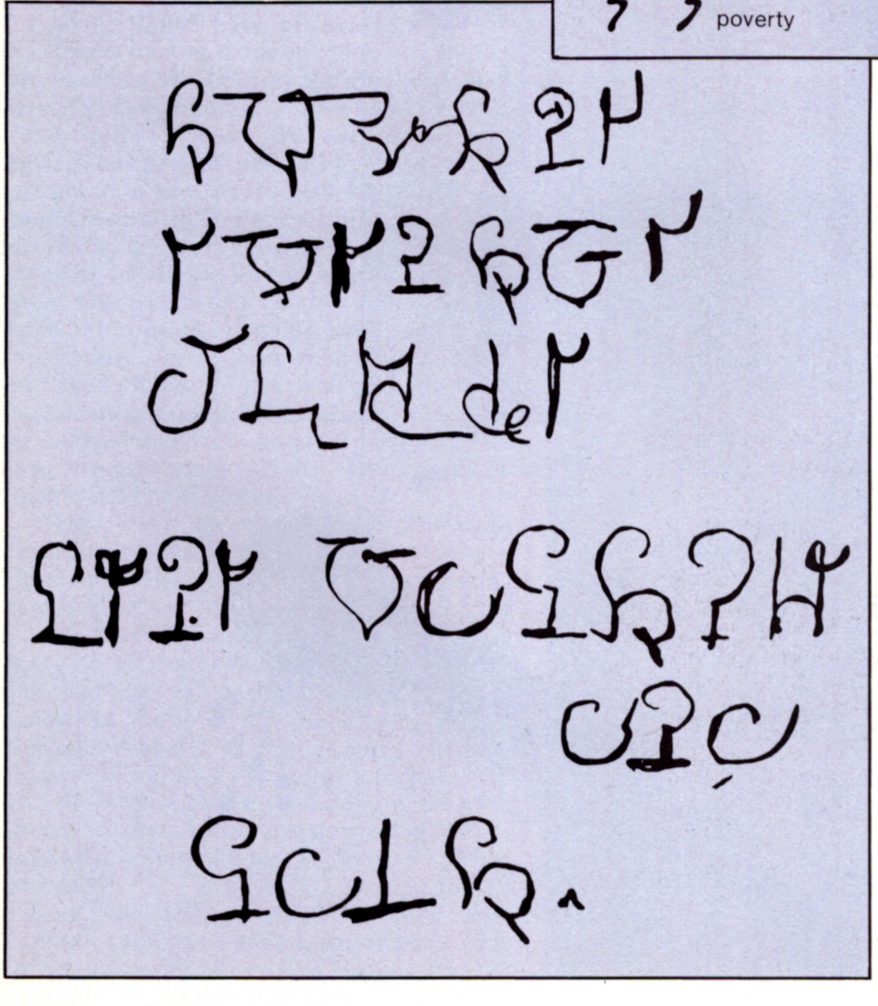
communicating with the departed Blanche Poynings.'

The first stage of a solution to the mystery came at a tea party at Miss C.'s house. Her aunt and brother were present and they began talking about the then current craze for planchette readings. Lowes Dickinson was amused by Miss C.'s claim that she could draw faces with the planchette and he asked for a demonstration. The faces appeared but he found them uninteresting, so he went on to use the device for the traditional questions and answers. At one point he suggested that Blanche should be asked for, and the 14th-century lady immediately obliged.

A string of questions and answers brought out the unexpected name 'E. Holt'. This meant nothing to anyone present, but further answers revealed that 'Mrs Holt . . . wrote a book . . . all the people are in it . . . I am there . . . *Countess Maud* by Emily Holt.' Once the name of the novel was out in the open, Miss C. remembered having read a book with that title, and her aunt confirmed it. Yet neither of them could remember anything else about the book – not even the period it dealt with!

So a final hypnotic session was arranged, and Miss C. was asked to picture herself when young. When asked about her aunt reading *Countess Maud*, she was now able to describe the cover of the book and its main subjects. She went on to say: 'I used to turn





over the pages. I didn't read it, because it was dull. Blanche Poynings was in the book; not much about her.' Then she confessed that Blanche now seemed to her to have no existence apart from the printed page: 'Nearly all the events [are] from the book, but not her character.'

Lowes Dickinson scrutinised the novel thoroughly and, with trifling exceptions, discovered in it every person and every fact referred to in the hypnotic sessions. But he also noted that Miss C. had exaggerated the importance of the minor character Blanche, and had ignored the order of events in the book and substituted her own plan. In this way the whole of the borrowed material was skilfully presented in a natural way. He concluded:

> Her subconscious self showed in fact remarkable invention and dramatic power . . . so that if we had not happened to light upon the source of the information . . . it might have seemed a plausible view that Miss C. really did visit a real world and hold conversations with real people. As it is, the discovery . . . throws discredit on everything else, and especially on the elaborate details about her past lives with which Miss C.'s subconscious self favoured us.

Much of the genealogical information that so

In 1906 a clergyman's daughter known as Miss C. claimed she had received communications from a woman calling herself Blanche Poynings. Allegedly, Blanche had lived during the reign of Richard II (right), and had been a friend of the Countess of Salisbury. She spoke convincingly of the Countess's private life and of contemporary court events

Left: during seances, Hélène Smith wrote down these two pieces of 'Martian' script, translating some of the symbols

impressed Lowes Dickinson occurs not in the main text of *Countess Maud* but in an extremely detailed appendix. Yet when Miss C. was asked under hypnosis whether she had ever read the appendix she said 'no' and also denied that her aunt had read her this part of the book. And yet it is clear from a comparison of the appendix with the accounts given by 'Blanche Poynings' that this must be false. This confirms the necessity of treating testimony given under hypnosis with great caution.

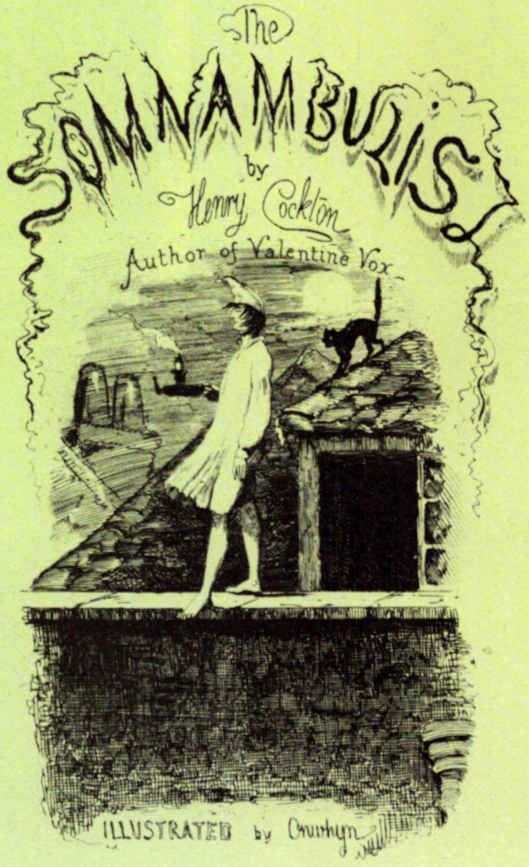
Seventy years later another young woman startled and impressed people with 'memories' of a past life. This time thousands were convinced by her dramatic testimony, for it was recorded on tape and even 'relived' before television cameras, before becoming the subject of a best-selling book.

The search for the sources of regression 'memories' is pursued on page 2626

The sleep of reason

Cases of somnambulism, or sleepwalking, fascinated the Victorians. They believed that when people sleepwalked information that had long been lost in the subconscious tended to resurface. Fortunately, this interest has provided us with some fascinating case histories.

One, recorded by Dr Dyce of Aberdeen, involved a servant girl who was subject to bouts of 'hypnotic sleep' during the day. In one of these sleeps she carried out her everyday duties without being in any way aware of what was going on around her. In another sleep she repeated the entire baptismal service of the Church of England – although she was unable to do so when awake. And, on one occasion, she sat through a church service in a trance-like state and was so moved by the sermon that she burst into tears – although she could not afterwards remember anything about it. However, in her next sleep she did manage to give an accurate account of that service.



The frontispiece to the novel *Sylvester Sound the somnambulist* by Henry Cockton, published in 1841. The story drew on many well-attested cases of actual somnambulism

Dr Dyce's contemporary, Dr Abercrombie, recorded a much more remarkable case involving the strange powers of a very dull and awkward servant girl who, once she went into a sleep-like trance, became gifted and erudite.

Dr Abercrombie noted that her language was always fluent and exact, and that her imagery was always appropriate and eloquent. Her most amazing feat, however, was giving a remarkable imitation of a violin playing. First the sound of the instrument being tuned up, then a practice session and finally a more elaborate piece.

It turned out that she had grown up in a farmhouse in which her sleeping quarters had had one very thin wall. The bedroom on the other side belonged to an itinerant fiddler. Each night he went through his repertoire while she slept. The music had obviously lodged in her subconscious, but it surfaced only during a trance-like sleep. Her ability to speak articulately and fluently was traced back to the conversations she had overheard in the schoolroom of the main house. This 'remarkable affection' lasted at least 10 years.

Search among the stars

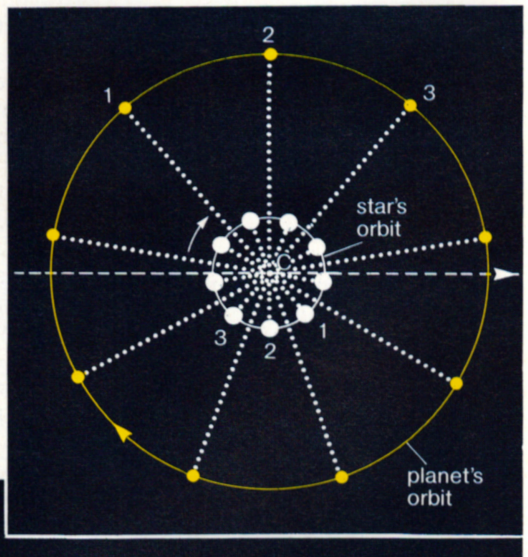
One day self-reproducing robot colonists may be launched on voyages of galactic exploration. But already, as ARCHIE ROY explains, astronomers have begun the search for inhabited planets orbiting the nearest stars

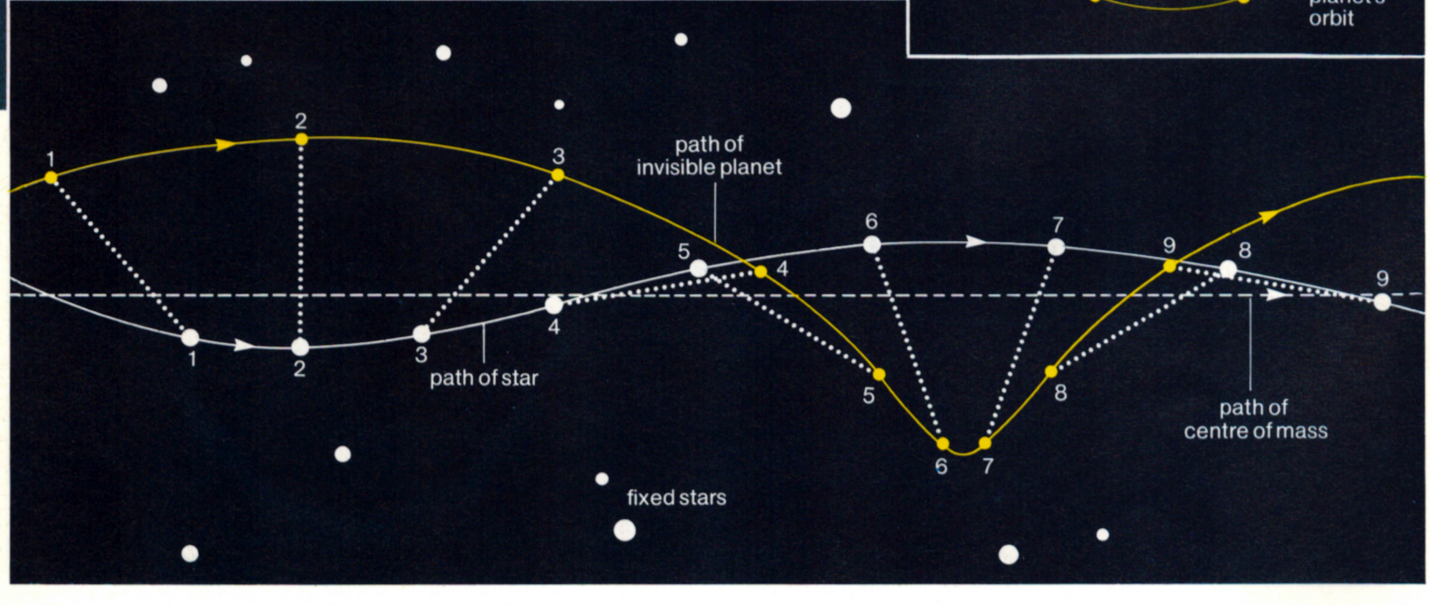
EVEN IF ONLY A FEW PLANETS had given rise to civilisations like our own in the past few thousand million years, the whole Galaxy should now be teeming with life, for it seems that only about 10 million years would be needed to colonise it (see page 2581). So where are all these intelligent beings? And if they do not exist – because intelligent life has *not* arisen elsewhere in the Galaxy – then why is our planet so special? Why, among the many millions of Earth-like planets orbiting Sun-like stars at a suitable distance for life to appear, has only Earth given rise to an intelligent species capable of asking these questions?

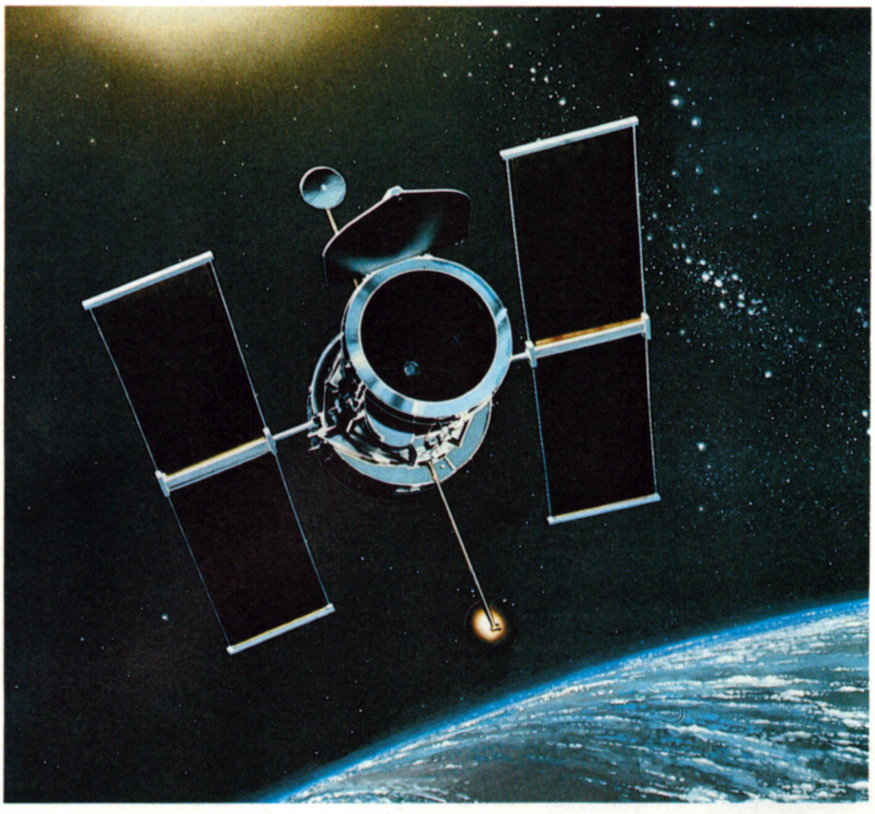
Today we are in a position to address these problems, both scientifically and technologically. To do so we need to search for three things: the planets of other stars; evidence of life on these planets; and evidence of intelligent life anywhere in space.

At present there are three techniques capable of finding the planets of other stars. One is to study the movement of a relatively nearby star against the background of the more distant stars. This motion will be a straight line only if the star is unaccompanied. If it has companions, then all the bodies will revolve around their joint centre of gravity; the star will follow a 'wavy' line through space, which would reveal its invisible companions' presence. By studying such an oscillation it would even be possible to determine how many companions there

Huge storm systems swirl in the atmosphere of Jupiter, the largest planet in the solar system. The gas giant dwarfs two of its own satellites in this picture taken by a Voyager spacecraft. Planets even larger than Jupiter are known to circle some stars relatively close to the Sun







the starlight is broken up into its constituent wavelengths). Fine dark lines ('missing wavelengths') appear in any such spectra, and these shift their position slightly if the star's velocity towards or away from the observer on Earth changes. Such changes of velocity reveal that the star is being pulled by an unseen companion. Once again, advances in the design and construction of large spectrographs promise to enable us to detect at least the larger planets in orbit about the nearest stars.

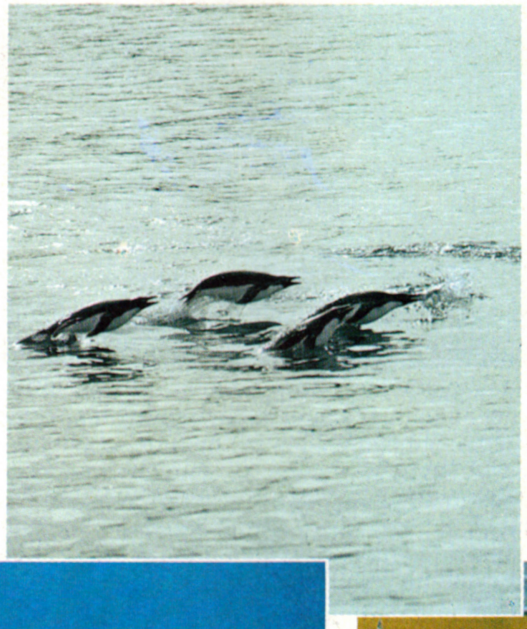
The third method of detection is to observe the planets directly through telescopes. This would be like trying to see a firefly near a searchlight. But it may be possible when large space telescopes are in orbit. And if the planets can be photographed and their spectrum can be obtained, it would then be possible to look for evidence of life.

To an alien observing the Earth from the depths of space, the Earth's atmosphere would soon give away the fact that there is life here. The alien's spectroscope would reveal the presence of an enormous amount of free oxygen, a highly active element, which would quickly combine with other substances unless it were continually being replenished by plant life. More careful study

were that were sufficiently massive to affect the star's course.

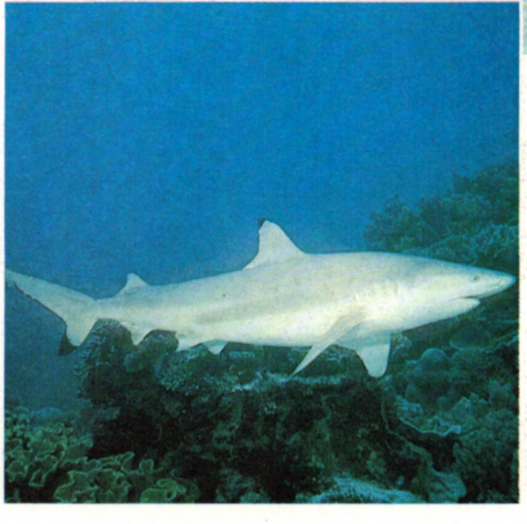
It is by an application of this technique that Barnard's star (see page 2585) has fallen under suspicion of having two planets, each with a mass about equal to that of Jupiter, in almost circular orbits. Other stars, such as 61 Cygni and 70 Ophiuchi, also seem to have invisible companions, each apparently more massive than Jupiter. Until now planets as small as the Earth could not be detected but modern technical advances make it likely that if the nearest stars possess such companions they will soon be detected, especially when large telescopes are put into orbit around the Earth.

The second method of detecting the planets of other stars is to examine the spectrum (the band of colours formed when



Above left: in orbit above the Earth's distorting atmosphere, telescopes will be able to see extremely faint objects with great clarity – including, perhaps, Earth-sized planets circling nearby stars

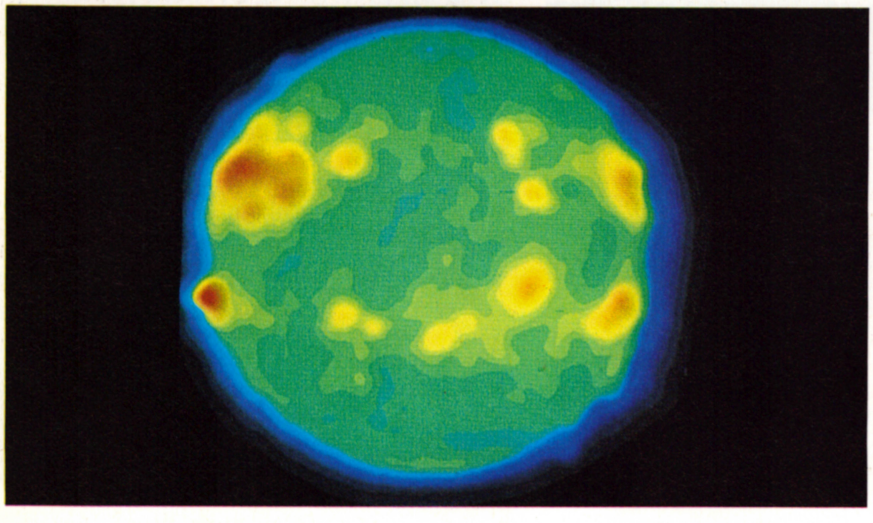
Birds, fish and mammals that have adapted to water look superficially similar – for example, the penguin (left), the shark (below left) and the whale (below). Would planets with Earth-like environments tend to produce intelligent beings of near-human appearance?



Left: an unseen planet can reveal its presence by its influence on the star to which it belongs. The star and the planet revolve about their common centre of mass, or 'centre of gravity' (above). The numbers indicate the corresponding positions of the two bodies in their respective orbits. In relation to the Earth the centre of mass follows a straight course through space (below), but the star follows a wavy path, thus betraying the presence of its invisible companion

would reveal traces of methane, which is produced biologically. Our alien might even detect fluorocarbons, the result of leakages from refrigerators and aerosol spray cans. If we found such chemical 'signatures' in the spectra of the planets of other stars, we could legitimately deduce that they carried life of our type and probably had technological civilisations as well.

The discovery of life-bearing planets would greatly strengthen the probability that the Galaxy also contained *intelligent* races; the idea that among perhaps millions of life-bearing planets the Earth was the only one to produce intelligence would surely be unthinkable. It is a rule of organic life that, no matter how different the origins of diverse species, the environment plays a dominant part in moulding them. The penguin, the dolphin and the shark are respectively a bird, a mammal and a fish, whose evolutionary lines diverged millions of years ago. Nevertheless their adaptation to the same environment, the oceans, has caused them all to take on a fish-like form.



The Sun as it looks on radio wavelengths. The image was produced by a computer from the signals picked up by a radio telescope: the red spots are the areas that emit radio waves most strongly. If the solar system were observed by radio telescopes of an alien race, the Sun would be far 'outshone' on certain wavelengths by the flood of radio and television signals from the Earth's transmitting stations

Again, it has been pointed out that the mammals of North America and the marsupials of South America, genetically distinct and geographically separated from each other, produced their own forms of the sabre-toothed cat, the camel and the hippopotamus. Intelligence has obvious survival value: it seems reasonable to suppose that on an Earth-like planet with forms of life based on carbon and water, evolving in environments similar to the Earth's, intelligent species would evolve and would perhaps develop a scientific and technological civilisation.

Could we gather indisputable evidence of their existence?

We could eavesdrop on the use they made of the electromagnetic spectrum. At the present time our own planet is 'noisy' at radio wavelengths. Our presence on Earth could already be detected at interstellar distances because of our ultra-powerful military radar systems and our television broadcasting stations. We do not need to send out radio signals deliberately designed to draw the attention of other intelligent species. For years our planet has been 'brighter' than the Sun at radio wavelengths. If another civilisation had receivers big enough to pick up such signals, it could calculate how far the Earth is from the Sun and the length of our year and day. Fortunately it would require much more sensitive receiving apparatus to decipher the actual programme signals, so we can still hope that there are not many species trying to understand our television violence and soap operas.

Interstellar eavesdropping

There is no doubt that in the very near future it should be possible for us to eavesdrop on any civilisations comparable in technology to our own on planets orbiting stars out to a distance of some 250 light years. Within that radius there are some million stars.

If such aliens are travelling between the stars, using spaceships somewhat more advanced than *Daedalus* – a vehicle designed by the British Interplanetary Society – it should be possible to 'watch' their progress across space. The ships' engines should produce highly energetic radiation in wavelengths from the radio region of the electromagnetic spectrum to the gamma ray region. And the ship's exhaust plume would interact with the galactic magnetic field, generating characteristic radiations. So far, however, we have detected no such signs of interstellar travel.

But alien races might not use radio and television waves to communicate. Perhaps they would look on these as being as primitive as semaphore. In which case, sending out one or more unmanned probes to other stars might be a more economical and surer way of searching for planets suitable for life, or even already occupied by intelligent species.

Daedalus, a starship proposed by the British Interplanetary Society, sheds its empty fuel tanks on its 50-year journey to the planetary system of Barnard's star

On the same wavelength?

Could intelligent beings from other worlds live in such different mental 'universes' from ours that we could not even recognise them as intelligent? For example, could their senses be entirely different from ours? Two gold plaques, bearing engraved diagrams, are now speeding into interstellar space on robot Pioneer spacecraft (see page 300). It has been objected that they would probably not even be recognised by aliens as a message: if such organisms had eyes at all, they would probably not be sensitive to the optical wavelengths – the ones we can see. But Carl Sagan, who was responsible for designing the plaques, counters that all planetary atmospheres are likely to be transparent at optical and radio wavelengths, just as the Earth's atmosphere is. Since 'eyes' that form images from radio waves are inconceivable – they would have to be impossibly huge – organisms on such planets would be likely to see the same wavelengths we see. But could we recognise intelligence in a micro-organism that completed its life cycle in a matter of hours? Or in an intelligent nebula that thought and acted on a time scale of millennia? We might find it harder to establish rapport with them than we would with the humanoid E.T. (left).

In one version of this idea the probe explores the vicinity of a star and moves on if it finds nothing of interest. If it comes across a promising planet, however, it goes into orbit about it. If there are signs of life on the planet, the probe may be programmed simply to listen for the first use of radio by an intelligent species.

Another idea is the 'von Neumann probe', named after a great American mathematician and computer pioneer who studied the concept of self-replicating machines. It is an intelligent robot probe able to build duplicates of itself from raw materials mined on planets and asteroids found in each planetary system that it visits. One or more of the duplicates would be built and sent on their way to other systems to carry on the task of exploration and reproduction. Any interesting discoveries would be radioed back to the civilisation that sent out the first von Neumann probe. With the probes 'breeding' in this manner, the search might take something like 10 million years.

Many people therefore argue that mankind's quest for intelligent life in the Galaxy should involve a search not only for radio signals but also for von Neumann probes orbiting the planets of our own solar system. Even if they had once been here but had left for some reason, the traces of their manufacturing activities could still exist in abandoned mines on some of the asteroids or satellites of the solar system.

But if the galactic 'club' of intelligent races uses physical laws and processes that we are still too primitive to have discovered, then its members may communicate by means of which we have no conception. After all, for all but the last hundred years of the countless millennia during which Man has been evolving, he has been unaware of the (natural) radio waves arriving at the Earth's surface from the depths of space: what else might be reaching us from the stars without our knowledge?

The galactic zoo

By the time of the Assembly of the International Astronomical Union (IAU), some dozen special searches for alien radio signals from space had been carried out in the United States, the Soviet Union and Canada. There had been no positive results. But it must be borne in mind that with our present hardware and techniques of data processing, we have barely dipped a toe in the infinite ocean of space. By 1982 further study of the problem had persuaded the IAU to set up a commission specifically to co-ordinate and encourage the search for extra-terrestrial intelligence.

It may well be that primitive forms of life will yet be found in our own solar system, most probably on Mars (see page 1450). If so, we would have to accept that the odds are in favour of life arising on any suitable planet and that there must be many, probably millions, of civilisations in our Galaxy. And if we still could not find any sign of their existence, we should have to ask ourselves why it was so hard to get in touch with them.

Perhaps more advanced civilisations deliberately hide themselves from us: we are quarantined, or even treated as the galactic equivalent of a zoo. Or perhaps we are undergoing a test that must be faced by any intelligent species that acquires the power to destroy itself by war or the greedy exploitation of its planet. If we grow up, rather than blow up, the aliens may then make themselves known to us.

Or it may be that, despite what was said above, life on other planets has taken very different paths from that taken by Man. The dominant species on other life-bearing planets may be so completely alien to us that no communication between them and us is possible: we may not even be able to recognise them as intelligent beings – or even living beings! Even on our own planet we find it difficult to communicate with our intelligent fellow mammals the dolphin and the whale.

Nevertheless our hope is that we are not alone in the Universe and that other intelligent species are sufficiently similar to us that we can talk to them.

On page 2634: how to start a conversation with intelligent aliens

Terror in the Great Lakes

The apparently calm waters of the Great Lakes of North America – the largest body of fresh water in the world – claim a horrifyingly large number of victims every year. FRANK SMYTH describes some of the cases – and asks, what mysterious force is at work?

ACCORDING TO the Chippewa Indians, whose ancestral hunting grounds lie around the shores of Lake Superior, on the border between the United States and Canada, the lake is haunted by a giant sturgeon. Among its attributes is the ability to swallow a ship whole, while the merest flick of its fin creates a maelstrom and the lash of its tail stirs the entire lake to turbulence. It is the movement of this monstrous fish, say the Chippewa, that causes the phenomenon known as the 'Three Sisters', a trio of waves that periodically rolls across the otherwise calm surface of the lake engulfing any vessel in its path.

Although the myth of the fish appears to belong to the realms of folklore, navigators on the five Great Lakes of North America – Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie and Ontario – tend to treat the story with respect. For they remember the sudden disasters that have been recorded on these vast waters ever since French explorers discovered them about 300 years ago. The grim reputation of Whitefish Bay, for instance, at the eastern end of Superior, is alluded to in its local name, the 'Graveyard of Ships'.

But from the 1970s onwards, ufologists and Fortean investigators have suspected that the old Indian legend symbolises something more significant than natural calamity; they believe that behind the large numbers of disappearances of ships and, latterly, aircraft, on the Great Lakes lies a mysterious power that rivals – and even surpasses – that said to rule the 'Bermuda Triangle'.

The Great Lakes together form the largest body of fresh water in the world, covering a total area of almost 100,000 square miles (260,000 square kilometres), while the 1000 rivers and streams that feed them drain an area of 228,000 square miles (600,000 square kilometres). Their size means that they have an oceanic effect, particularly on the climate of the surrounding lands, which are temperate in summer and warmed by the waters close to the lakes' shores in winter. Even allowing for their size, however, the lakes' reputation as destroyers of ships and men is astonishing. Although no official figures are kept for disasters occurring specifically on the Great Lakes, newspaper records over certain periods show staggering totals. Between 1870 and 1889, for instance, the number of shipping losses through wreck, grounding, burning, and sinking amounted to over 6000. Willis Metcalfe, an Ontario historian, recorded that in a single week in November 1856, nearly 30 vessels were lost on Lake Ontario, while in November 1913, 40 vessels and 672 lives were lost during a 4-day period. Modern aids to navigation seem only marginally to have improved matters; nine multi-thousand-tonne vessels were lost on the lakes between the mid 1940s and the mid 1960s. In the 60-odd years since aircraft began to make regular flights in the area they, too, have joined the list of Great Lakes disasters.

Two books in particular have drawn

Below: Lake Superior, the largest of the Great Lakes. The peculiarly high number of ships and aeroplanes that have disappeared beneath the waters of the lakes has earned them comparison with the Bermuda Triangle. An early case occurred in 1804, when the schooner *Speedy* (right) was lost – for no apparent reason – together with her crew on Lake Ontario (above)

attention to this mystery area. The first, in 1977, was Jay Gourley's *The Great Lakes Triangle* – although the strange events are not confined to a triangle – followed, in 1980, by Hugh F. Cochrane's *Gateway to oblivion.* Cochrane felt that although all five lakes were fraught with danger, it was the area around Marysburgh, at the eastern end of Lake Ontario, that seemed to pose the biggest threat; he termed it the 'Marysburgh Vortex'.

During the war of 1812 between Britain and the United States, two well-equipped American frigates, the 110-tonne *Scourge* and the 112-tonne *Hamilton*, were sailing down Lake Ontario towards the fortified port of Niagara when both vessels rolled over in unison and sank; only 10 men out of the total complement of 100 survived, and none could offer any explanation for what had happened. Something similar had apparently happened eight years previously, when the government schooner *Speedy* vanished on Lake Ontario, taking with her many of Canada's most important officials and becoming one of the most famous maritime disasters in the history of the country.

The *Speedy* set sail from York – now Toronto – in November 1804. On board were a group of judges and legislators bound for Presqu'ile, 90 miles (140 kilometres) away, and an Indian prisoner named Ogetonicut, who was due to be hanged for murder in the new coastal town of Newcastle. The *Speedy* had two experienced captains, who worked alternately. Captain James Richardson, who was to command the ship on its ill-fated voyage, had deep forebodings as he set sail. Without giving any rational explanation, he tried to persuade the officials to cancel or postpone the voyage, and was ordered to step down in favour of the schooner's second master, Captain Thomas Paxton. Shortly after the *Speedy* left harbour, a storm blew up; bonfires were lit on the shores at Newcastle to guide the vessel in, but instead she was seen to drive on under full sail. No trace of her or her crew was ever found.

Cochrane suggests that the gathering of telluric, or Earth, currents similar to those said to effuse from leys and standing stones somehow communicated themselves to Captain Richardson, warning him of disaster, while the less sensitive Paxton felt nothing. He quotes a similar occurrence in the case of the sailing ship *Eleanor Hamilton*, which was lost on Lake Ontario in 1854. The crew of the ship seems to have had a collective premonition and came close to mutiny before bowing to the demands of its captain and setting sail. No bodies were ever recovered, but wreckage washed ashore was found to be smashed into small pieces; as Cochrane put it: 'something akin to a giant fist had slammed down on the vessel and turned her into kindling while she sailed through the blackness of the night.'

A much more gentle force apparently sank the sturdy tug *Sachem* on Lake Erie in December 1950. She sailed from Buffalo to

Dunkirk, New York, but though the weather stayed fine and clear she never arrived at her destination. A month later the bodies of her crew began to wash ashore, and the following October the United States Coast Guard located the *Sachem* sitting upright on the bottom of the lake. She was raised and examined; her hull and machinery were found to be in perfect condition, though the bridge and engine-room telegraph levers were in the 'stop' position, and the bridge windows had been smashed.

A similarly undamaged victim of the Great Lakes was the *Bavaria*, which was found abandoned on Galloo Island, Ontario, in 1889 in a manner reminiscent of the *Mary Celeste* (see page 950). The ship had been missing for several days; when she was found she was undamaged, apart from a little water in her bilges, and a canary, the only living thing aboard, still sang in one of the cabins. A batch of freshly baked bread lay in the galley, and the captain's papers, plus a large sum of money, were in his desk.

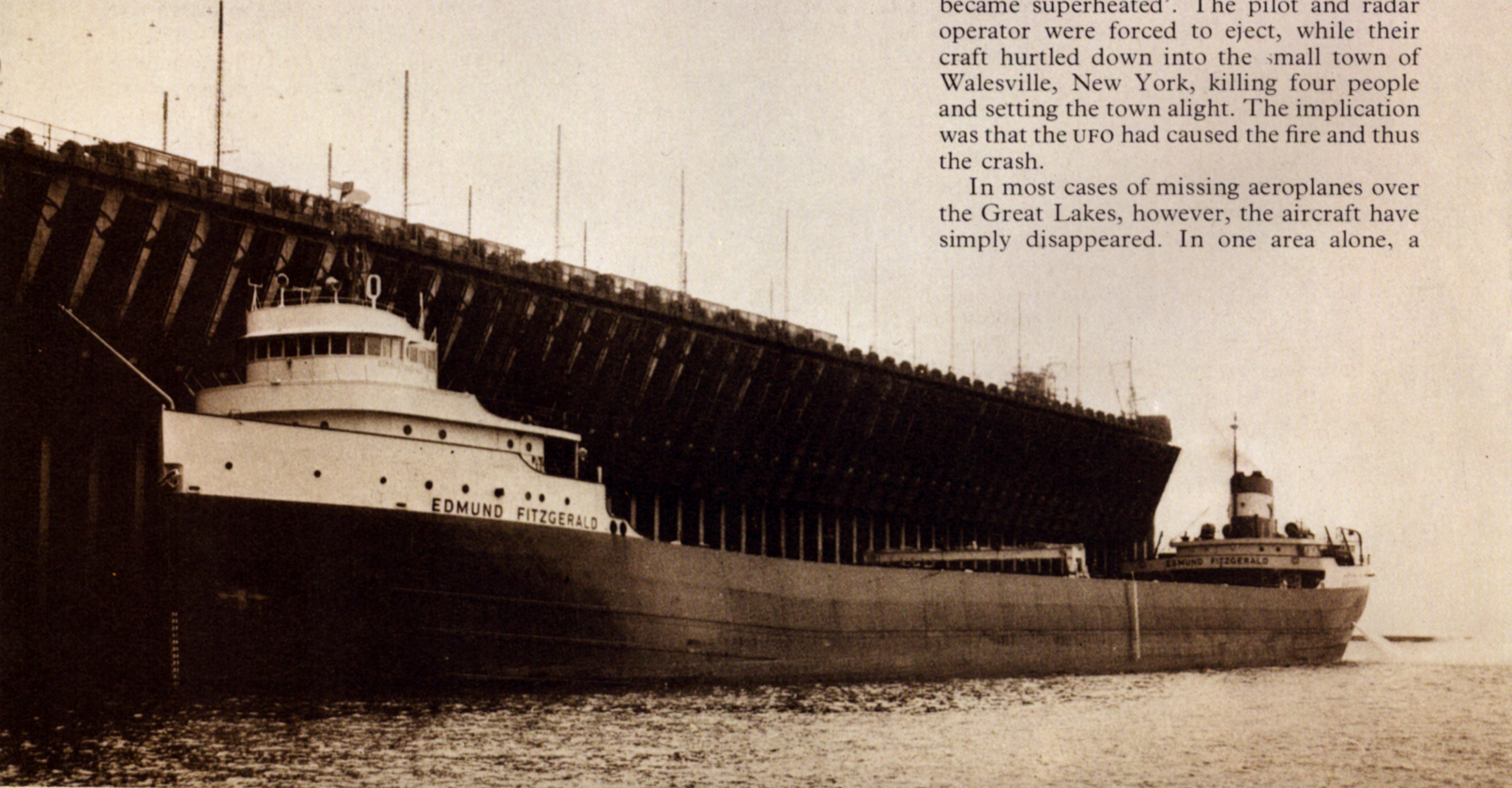
Whatever it is that caused these and many similar wrecks has neither decreased in power nor in the number of victims it claims with the passage of time. The *Edmund Fitzgerald* was an 8-million-dollar, 729-foot (222-metre) cargo ship carrying 26,000 tonnes of pelletised iron ore from Superior, Wisconsin, to the blast furnaces of Detroit when she vanished on 10 November, 1975. Her captain, Ernest R. McSorley, radioed a following ship, the *Arthur Anderson*, at 7.10 p.m. to say that he had shipped a little water from the heavy seas, and although his vessel was in no danger he requested that the *Arthur Anderson* remain in visual and radar contact with him. Minutes later both the lights of the *Edmund Fitzgerald* and her blip on the radar screen disappeared. In August 1977 she was found in 500 feet (170 metres) of water, sliced neatly in two. In 1978 the US National Transportation Safety Board ruled that faulty hatch covers had caused the disaster – without, however, explaining how the ship had vanished so quickly.

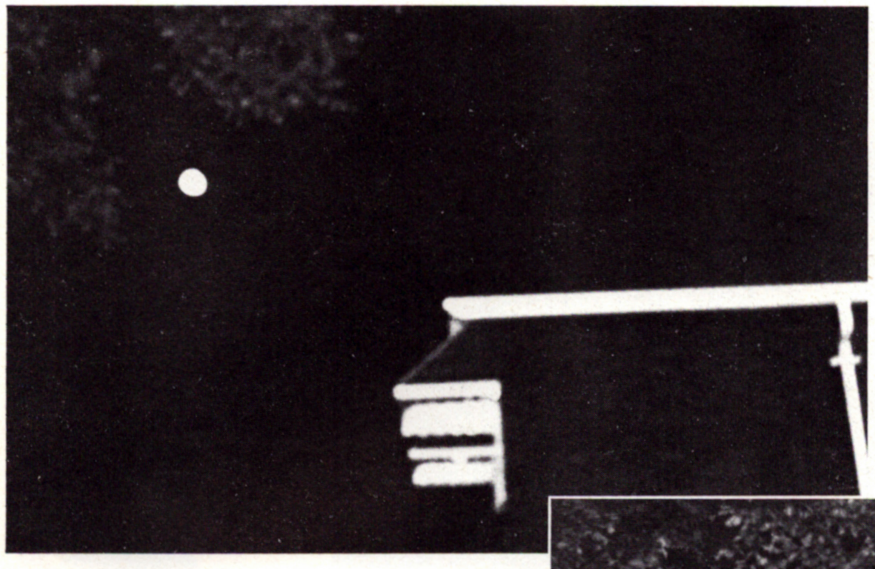
Above: the great fire of Chicago. Sudden and unexplained fires have engulfed both ships and coastal towns on the Great Lakes: Chicago, 'at the bottom of Lake Michigan', met its fate in 1871, while the centre of Toronto, on the shores of Lake Ontario, was razed by fire in 1904

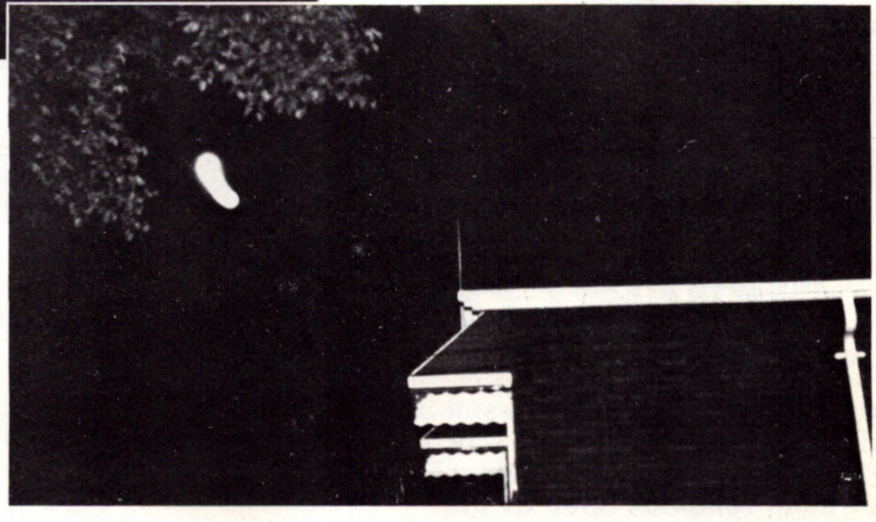
Below: the 8-million-dollar cargo ship *Edmund Fitzgerald*, which vanished on 10 November 1975. In August 1977 she was found under 500 feet (170 metres) of water – neatly sliced in two

Sudden and unexplained fire has brought destruction to many ships in the Great Lakes area; coastal towns, too, have suffered from huge conflagrations, and Cochrane suggests that the great fire of Chicago in 1871 and the one that destroyed the centre of Toronto in 1904 might have had paranormal origins. Both he and Gourley cite the case of a fire that broke out in the cockpit of an F-94 jet of the USAAF in July 1954 after the aircraft had been scrambled to intercept a 'disc shaped UFO which had been sighted in the sky to the west of Griffiss Air Force Base'. As the jet closed with the UFO, the cockpit 'suddenly became superheated'. The pilot and radar operator were forced to eject, while their craft hurtled down into the small town of Walesville, New York, killing four people and setting the town alight. The implication was that the UFO had caused the fire and thus the crash.

In most cases of missing aeroplanes over the Great Lakes, however, the aircraft have simply disappeared. In one area alone, a







Above: these two photographs were taken by a Toronto resident, Cliff Crocker, outside his home. As he was taking the pictures, the object sped away without making a sound. Computer analysis later showed that the light came from an intense source that was capable of moving at high speed

stretch of the north shore of Lake Superior, 34 people and 17 aircraft vanished without trace between 1952 and 1982; in at least two cases light aircraft have been found crashed with their wings sliced off. Several pilots have complained of the sudden appearance of all-engulfing fog. In 1966 an 'experienced' pilot was flying his light aircraft on a well-established route along the south shore of Lake Erie when he radioed Cleveland Air Traffic Control Center to say that he had entered thick fog and was 'unable to tell up from down'. He had just time to tell them that he was spinning and falling when his transmission ended abruptly and his radar blip vanished from the screen.

Dazed and hobbling

In one of the most tantalising cases the pilot survived – but with no memory of what had happened to him. According to the *Toronto Star* a veteran pilot named Tom Walker, with nine years' flying experience over the Great Lakes, took off in poor visibility from Island Airport, Toronto, for his home 80 miles (130 kilometres) to the north at Owen Sound. All contact with him was lost and for two days a search was carried out – until he was found, dazed and hobbling, in a suburb of Toronto. He was taken to hospital and treated for multiple injuries and a broken ankle. He told his wife that his last memory was of sudden fog all around him, but he had no memory of the crash or of his whereabouts at the time. Because of his broken ankle it was thought that he could not have travelled very far from the site of the crash – but the wreckage of the aircraft was never located.

Reports of 'lights in the sky' have accompanied many aircraft disappearances in recent years, which seems to add weight to the growing theory that alien intelligences are behind the mayhem on the Great Lakes. One of the first to record these was Mrs John Graves Simcoe, whose husband became first Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada (now Ontario) in 1791. In her diary Mrs Simcoe noted that, shortly after their arrival, the eastern end of Lake Ontario was rocked by a series of earthquakes. These were followed by 'globes of light' that appeared from the south-west and moved in a north-westerly direction, following the course of the St Lawrence river. More recently, in February 1913, various reliable witnesses in Toronto, including two astronomers, saw a 'procession' of lights that moved from the north-west to the south-east, taking five minutes to pass over Toronto. Recording the event in the Royal Canadian Astronomical Society's *Journal*, one astronomer described it as being like 'an express train lighted at night'.

The following day, according to the *Toronto Star*, the 'procession' was seen again in daylight. It consisted of several objects that showed dark against the bright sky and moved in groups of three and seven.

Two years later, on 14 February 1915, residents of Morristown, New York, and Brockville, Ontario – communities on opposite banks of the St Lawrence – reported seeing 'great searchlights' shining down on them from the night sky. According to the *New York Times* of the following day the lights, three in number, travelled an estimated 40 miles (65 kilometres) north-east, and then returned south-west.

More recently, the whole Great Lakes area has been a centre of UFO reports. In 1974 to 1975 sightings reached a peak, with at least two dozen reports coming in from around the entire 100,000 square mile (260,000 square kilometre) area. Mainly they involved golden lights, red, green and white flashing lights, and pairs of white and red lights hovering low over the lakes' surface.

With the disappearance of ships and aircraft, strange fogs, fires and nocturnal lights, the so-called 'Great Lakes Triangle' does seem to rival its Bermudan counterpart. But are these weird happenings as inexplicable as they seem?

On page 2646: some scientific explanations – and some real mysteries

Miracles of the Virgin

Are 'miracle' cures the result of direct divine intervention – or are they somehow brought about, through religious faith, by the power of the human mind itself? KEVIN McCLURE weighs up these theories – and assesses the validity of some famous cures

LINDA MARTEL, a child who died aged five, Sai Baba, an Indian mystic, and Willard Fuller, who is known as the 'psychic dentist', have all been noted for their 'miracle cures' (see page 2590). And all of them claimed a special relationship with God that enabled them to heal – but few of their cures have been subjected to serious investigation by medical experts.

The Roman Catholic Church makes it its business to investigate all alleged miracle cures connected with its saints or shrines. To most people in this cynical age, the very mention of miracle cures brings to mind the shrine at Lourdes in France, scene of some of the most famous healing miracles of the 19th and 20th centuries. The cures continue to be reported, as in this piece in the Roman Catholic newspaper the *Universe* on 8 October 1982:

> The Lourdes International Medical Commission on Saturday confirmed that the 'scientifically unexplainable' cure of a 17-year-old Sicilian girl is officially accepted as the 65th miracle to occur following visits to the shrine and prayer. Delizia Ciroli will today as usual help her mother with household tasks at the family home in the foothills of Mount Aetna and then attend to her studies as a nurse. Six years ago doctors gave her three months to live.
>
> When she was 11 Delizia was taken for tests following severe leg pains. Her parents were told only amputation or radiation would save her. But they preferred to 'pray and trust in God'. [Delizia Ciroli was suffering from cancer.]
>
> Delizia went to Lourdes with the help of schoolchums' collections. A few days after her return the pain disappeared and she could walk again. A consultant told her mother: 'It is beyond belief. Your daughter's tests now show no trace of the disease.' Delizia now visits Lourdes every year, not only in thanksgiving, but for rigorous medical examination.

Lourdes was an obscure French village until 11 February 1858, when an uneducated peasant girl, Bernadette Soubirous, saw a vision of a young girl, who quickly became known as the Virgin Mary – although the identity of the vision was by no means certain until the local priest told Bernadette whom she must have seen. There were 18 visions altogether; during the ninth, the apparition ordered Bernadette to scrabble in the muddy earth, where she found a spring – to the great astonishment of the large crowd that had gathered. The spring has flowed ever since,

Top: an artist's impression of one of the 18 visions of the Virgin Mary experienced by a young peasant girl, Bernadette Soubirous, at Lourdes in southern France in February 1858. At the scene of one of the visions, Bernadette found a healing spring; this has since become a place of pilgrimage for the sick. Of the many thousands of alleged cures at Lourdes, the Roman Catholic Church recognises only the few that its rigorous medical tests allow as genuine. The case of Delizia Ciroli (top centre), who in 1976 was cured at Lourdes of cancer, was in 1983 under examination by the Church authorities

yielding 27,000 gallons (123,000 litres) a day, even during drought. It is the water of this spring – and the belief that the Virgin herself caused it to flow – that attracts the hordes of pilgrims to Lourdes, and creates their fervent belief in the healing power of the shrine.

Most well-attested visions of the Virgin Mary date from 1800 (see page 1550), but there is a strong tradition linking Marian visions with healing powers that goes back many hundreds of years. This is one of the many cases collected by 'Johannes Herolt called Disciplus' around the middle of the 15th century (although the first such collection is said to have been published as early as the 11th century):

In the crusade of the Catholics against

The Virgin Mary is associated with many shrines at which, it is claimed, miraculous cures take place. She allegedly appeared in 1879 – with a group of oddly two-dimensional religious figures – on the gable of the church of what is now the shrine of Knock in County Mayo, Republic of Ireland (left). And in 1917, it is said, she appeared to three shepherd children in Fatima, Portugal. A torchlight procession (above right) accompanies the statue of Our Lady of Fatima to the basilica of St Mary, the world's largest church of the Virgin

Below: the Beatles in concert. Many fans believed that the Beatles had miraculous healing powers

the heretic Albigenses two worthy clerics were passing through the country of the latter, and on their way, seeing a deserted church, one said to the other: 'It is Saturday, let us go into this church and say a mass in honour of the Holy Virgin Mary', for they carried with them a book and chalice and priest's vestments.

But, before the mass was ended, heretics appeared who, entering with [severed] arms in their hands, dragged the priest from the church and cut out his tongue by the roots. His companion with much trouble took him, mutilated as he was, and entrusted him to monks; and they, like good Catholics and monks, heartily received the dumb priest.

But on the night of the Epiphany, when the solemn watch-service was being sung, he summoned the attendants by beating on the wall with a staff. When they asked him what he wanted and he made signs that he should be carried into the oratory, wishing to spare him, they did not do as he wished. At length, as he persisted, they took him into the church and put him down before a certain altar. On his calling upon the Mother of Mercy with all the earnestness of his soul she appeared to him holding in her hand a piece of flesh that had the shape of a tongue, and said to him, as he prayed: 'Because you were deprived of your tongue through faith in my son and through honouring me, behold, I give you a new one. Open your mouth.' When he had done so, she put her fingers into his mouth and joined the flesh exactly to the root and

made them one, and so disappeared. And he, breaking out into words of praise, as Zacharias did, shouted aloud: 'Hail Mary,' and the rest of the salutation.

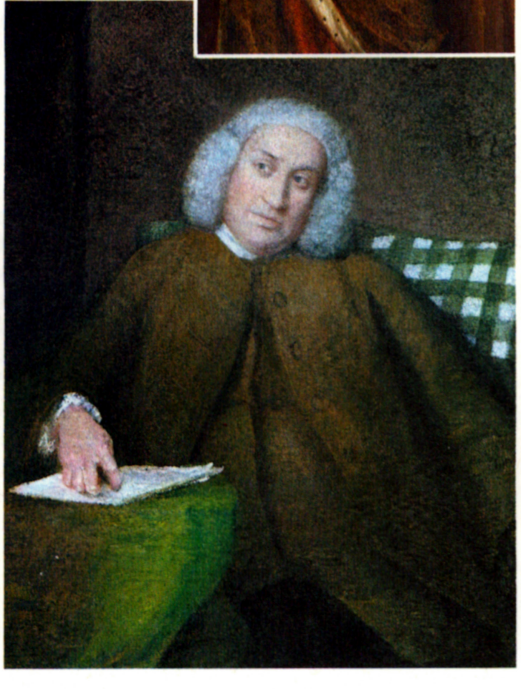
Another account from the same book tells of a similar cure being effected by what can only be described as a kind of divine breastfeeding, and there are others that are similarly bizarre. Of course, they were more or less myths and legends even when they were recorded in the 15th century and there is no way of assessing their veracity at this distance in time.

It is reasonable to see the current age of Marian apparitions as starting with that afforded to St Catherine Labouré in Paris in 1830. Her vision resulted in the wide distribution of the 'miraculous medal', bearing the image of the Virgin as the saint had seen her; many healings and other miracles were attributed to its ownership. From then on, it is hard to find a serious report of a vision in which healings are not an almost immediate consequence.

The incidents at La Salette, where the Virgin appeared in three dramatic tableaux to two young children on a remote hillside on 19 September 1846, almost anticipate those at Lourdes 12 years later. The similarities between the two incidents include the background and limited intelligence of the children concerned, and there was even a dried-up pool near the scene of the vision. This did not, however, suddenly spring to life before the two children as before Bernadette, but by the time others went up to the hillside, within 48 hours of the event, it was flowing as if there had been heavy rainfall – which there had not. It is said not to have ceased flowing since. Water from this spring, known as the 'Little Fountain', was quickly bottled, and cures were soon claimed. One early, and apparently genuine, miracle cure was that of Antoinette Bollenat of Avallon:

> Afflicted with an epigastric tumour from her twelfth year, she was now so near death that for a whole week she could not be moved from her bed. On the last day of a novena to Our Lady of La Salette, after taking the last spoonful of water from the Spring on the Holy Mountain she instantly recovered perfect health. The Most Rev. Archbishop of Sens, after juridical examination, judged that this fact presented, 'all the conditions and marks of a miraculous cure'.

There were also a number of cures reported to the owner of the field where a remarkable Marian vision was seen at Pontmain, France, on 17 January 1871, by four young children.



Top right: Monsieur l'Abbé Saint-Hubert questions the five young witnesses of the vision at Beauraing, Belgium, of 1932. Whether or not the vision itself actually happened is not certain – but the site has been credited with miraculous cures

Right: Dr Samuel Johnson (1709–1784), the famous English essayist and lexicographer. As a child, Johnson suffered from scrofula, 'the King's Evil' – which, it was believed, could be cured by the touch of a divinely anointed monarch. Johnson's mother took him to see Queen Anne (above right) – but the royal cure failed to work

Two-dimensional Virgin

The shrine of Knock, in Ireland, where some oddly two-dimensional religious figures, including the Virgin, were seen on the gable end of the village church on 21 August 1879, is said to have been the scene of many cures. One, reported in a booklet of the Catholic Truth Society, states:

> In 1882 Archbishop Murphy of Hobart, Tasmania, travelled twenty-five thousand kilometres [15,000 miles] to return thanks at Knock for the restoration of his sight, through the application of cement from Knock Church. His gift to the shrine was a large oil painting of St Joseph and the child Jesus.

The visions and shrines of the 20th century, despite the increasing use of scientific methods of enquiry, have continued to produce

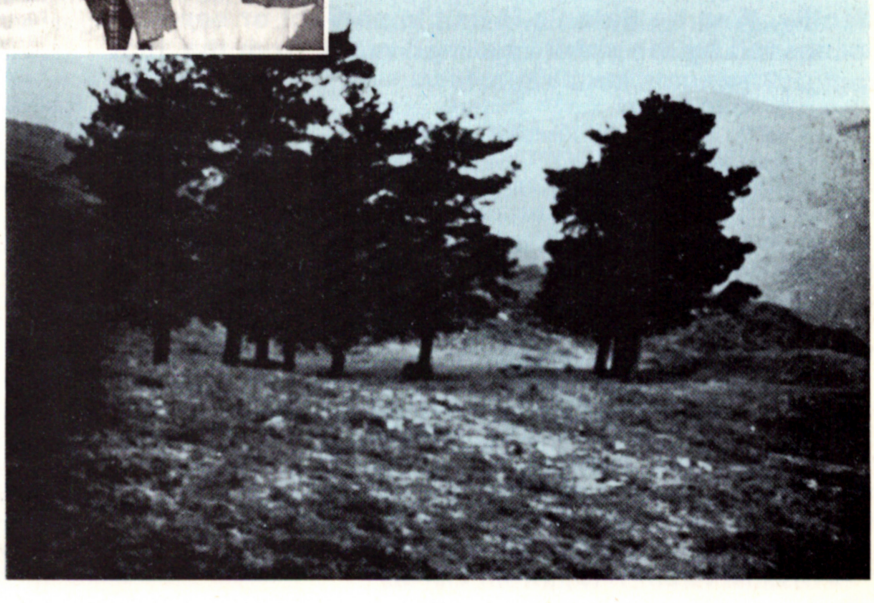
well-supported claims of healing, as have phials of holy water, scapulas, medallions, and other items that are blessed or supplied at the shrines.

Hundreds of cures are claimed for the scene of the 'Dance of the Sun' at Fatima, in Portugal. And, similarly, five young visionaries of Beauraing, Belgium – whose claims have been received sceptically even by a number of Catholic scholars, including Father Herbert Thurston – have been credited with cures. After speaking with one of the children, Gilbert Degeimbre, a Miss Van Laer is said to have found herself, after years of suffering, with 'no pains, no tumours, no sores, and no deformities'. The less well-known apparitions at Banneux in Belgium, near the French border, which are often seen as an unconscious 'carbon copy' of the famous events at Beauraing – though to many oddly convincing – have also produced many claims of healing, including that of cerebro-spinal meningitis, gangrene, deafness and blindness.

The two major Marian visions since the 1950s – at Garabandal, Spain, in the early 1960s, and at Zeitoun, Egypt, in 1968 – continue the pattern. Hardly an issue of the quarterly *Garabandal* magazine appears without a number of reports of cures; several cases resulting from the Zeitoun apparitions were investigated – and accepted as genuine – by a papal medical committee set up by Kyrillos VI, Pope of Alexandria. Ailments cured included cancer, hernia, paralysis, blindness and dumbness.

Yet it is still Lourdes that holds centre stage among the scenes and inspiration of cures, and it is certainly to Lourdes that we should look if we are to try to assess the significance and meaning of the various remissions, cures and recoveries that undoubtedly do occur. There is so much evidence that some people – even if only a small fraction of those who visit the various shrines – do come away in far better health than they were in when they arrived. It is difficult to argue with the facts. At Lourdes, which is attended by an average of 4.3 million pilgrims every year, many of them hoping for cures, a careful system of investigation into claims of miraculous cures has been set up, and its work is formal, thorough, lengthy and painstaking. Since 1858 only 65 cures have been recognised by the Church as being miraculous in origin, and some of the early cases were not as well-researched as the more recent ones. Prior to the cure of Delizia Ciroli in 1982, the previous case accepted by the Church as miraculous had occurred in 1970, and the one before that in 1963.

Below: the four witnesses of the Garabandal apparition of 1961. The Virgin Mary appeared to the girls many times over some pine trees on the outskirts of the village (bottom) – and miracle cures continue to be reported from Garabandal

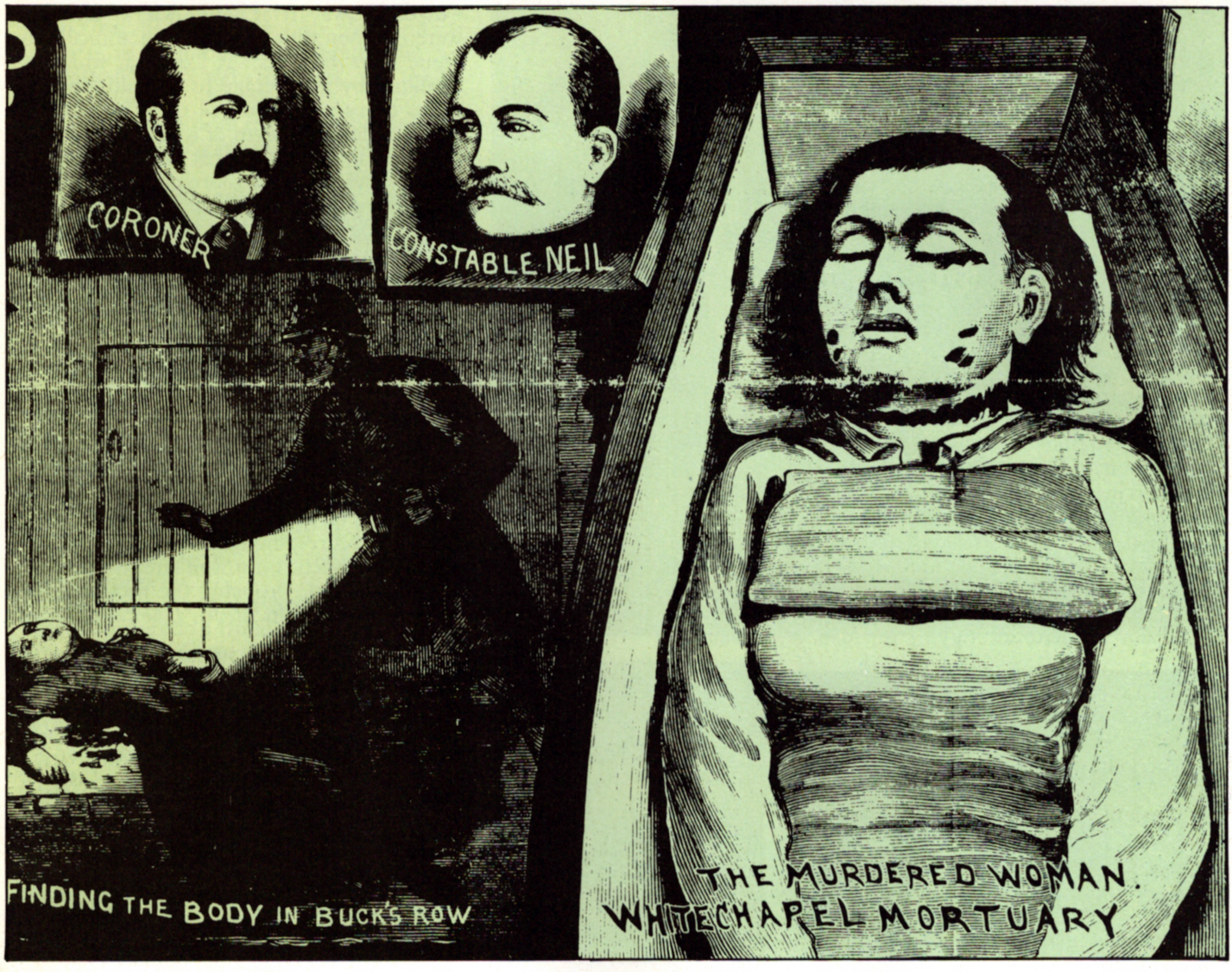


Doubtful diagnoses?

There have been harsh criticisms about some of the methods of the Medical Bureau at Lourdes, particularly with regard to its acceptance of the diagnoses of the diseases involved in cures: though it is hard to see how a diagnosis can be improved after the disease has been cured. Probably the most careful criticism appears in *Eleven Lourdes miracles* by D. J. West (1957).

If one assumes that a true 'miracle cure' is brought about by the direct, conscious intervention of some non-human power, it is, of course, impossible to prove which cures are miraculous and which are not. Some cures are so spectacular and so sudden that even in this sophisticated age the only source would seem to be divine.

The only alternative explanation is that the human capacity for self-healing is infinitely more effective than we have imagined – and that faith, whether it causes visions or is the result of them, is the trigger that releases this astonishing power within us. And considering the glimpses we have of the enormous potential of the subconscious mind – as in the case of stigmatics (see page 846) or in firewalking (see page 301) – perhaps this is the more likely explanation.



The Ripper—black magician?

Some occultists have theorised as to Jack the Ripper's identity. Was he Satan's invisible servant or someone possessed by the spirit of a mad monk from the 16th century? FRANCIS KING reports

JACK THE RIPPER – the perverted murderer whose activities in the foggy London autumn of 1888 terrified the inhabitants of the poverty-stricken East End, intrigued the newspaper readers of half the world, and even led Queen Victoria to write to the Home Secretary on the subject – was never caught and brought to trial.

It is perhaps for this reason that more books and articles have been published on the Victorian Ripper killings than on any other series of sex murders. Many such books put forward extraordinary theories as to the true motives and identities of the killer.

Thus it has been suggested that the Ripper was 'one of the highest in the land' – the Duke of Clarence, grandson of Queen Victoria, elder brother of the future King George V, and an active homosexual. Other likely candidates for Ripperhood have included J. K. Stephen, cousin of the writer Virginia Woolf, and M. J. Druitt, a leading amateur cricketer whose relatives decided that he was the Ripper because they considered him 'sexually insane' – which in this connection probably means no more than that he was dismissed from his job as a schoolmaster for making homosexual advances towards one of his pupils.

The Ripper terrified London's East End in 1888. The *Illustrated Police News* carried graphic up-to-the-minute reports on his latest attacks

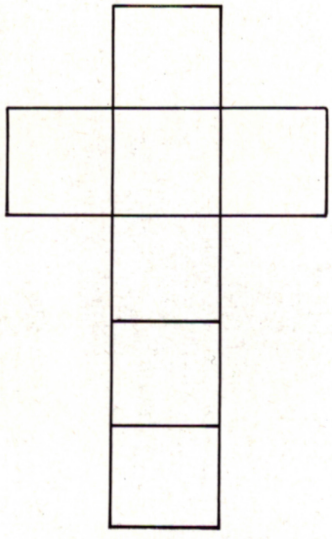
All these theories are highly coloured, to say the least, but they pale into insignificance beside some occult notions concerning the murders. That, for example, the murders happened as a result of the actions of an insane monk in the reign of Henry VIII, or that the police never succeeded in catching Jack the Ripper because he was, literally, invisible.

The first of these theories seems to be derived from facts given in J. F. Brewer's book *The curse upon Mitre Square* (1889). It claims that the unhappy spirit of a monk who, in the year 1530, murdered a praying woman and then committed suicide, haunts Mitre Square and its surroundings in the East End of London, seeking those of weak mind whom it can obsess and compel to repeat its own crimes. Jack the Ripper, it is argued, was a perfectly ordinary man whose mind had been possessed by the spirit of the mad monk.

According to the even more remarkable 'invisibility hypothesis', the Ripper was a black magician, a servant of Satan who, by the performance of dark and forbidden rites involving human sacrifice, had made himself intangible and invisible.

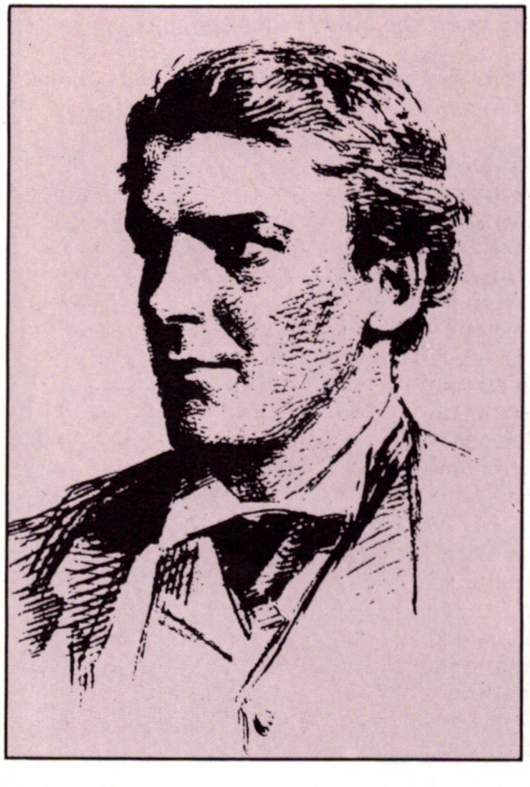
The occultist Aleister Crowley (see page 2081), who gave some space to the story in his *Confessions*, claimed that this theory was already current in occult circles at the time of the murders. It was suggested, affirmed Crowley, that a sorcerer had determined to carry out 'a supreme ritual' that would raise him to the pinnacle of occult power. This ritual, derived from some ancient textbook of black magic, involved the murder, mutilation, and eating of parts of the bodies of seven women, to be carried out in such a way that 'a Calvary Cross of seven points' was formed.

This seems to refer to an ordinary Christian cross – which, drawn in one of its most usual forms, can be divided into seven squares. The implied suggestion was that the magician-murderer had drawn such a cross and superimposed upon it a large-scale street map of the East End of London. Then he had carried out a ritual killing on each of the marked squares.



If, indeed, such a plan ever existed in the mind of Jack the Ripper it is apparent that he never fully completed it. For, despite published claims that the Ripper's victims were seven or more in number – one printed source attributes 20 killings to him – it is virtually certain that there were no more than five murders in the series. These were, in chronological order: Mary Ann Nichols, killed in the early morning of 31 August 1888; Annie Chapman, killed on 8 September, once again in the early morning; Elizabeth Stride and Catherine Eddowes, the so-called 'double event', both being killed in the early hours of 30 September – although at different sites; and Mary Jane Kelly, murdered over of period of some hours, on the morning of 9 November.

THE SEVENTH HORRIBLE MURDER BY THE MONSTER OF THE EAST-END.
MILLER'S COURT
MURDERER'S CHOSEN SPOT
WINDOWS BOARDED UP
THE SCENE OF THE MURDER, MILLER'S COURT
SCENE WITNESSED BY THE POLICE
LURED TO THE SLAUGHTER
£100 REWARD
THE SEVENTH VICTIM!
PICKED OUT FOR SLAUGHTER BY THE EAST-END FIEND
FROM DESCRIPTIONS GIVEN BY HER INTIMATE FRIENDS



Top: the occultist Aleister Crowley claimed that the Ripper was one of Satan's servants and that he carried out his murders in places that, when linked up, formed the image of a cross

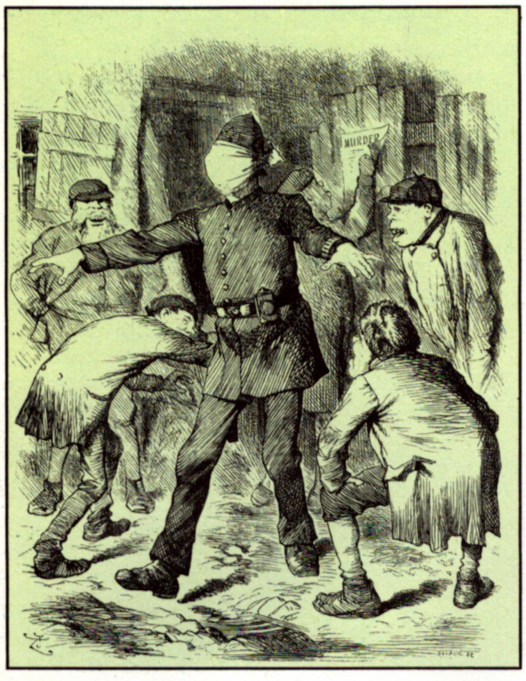
Above: a pictorial account, again from the *Illustrated Police News*, of the events leading up to and including the discovery of Mary Kelly, the last of the Ripper's victims

Although the Ripper has never been positively identified, many people think that there has been an establishment cover up. One of those suspected of being the Ripper was Virginia Woolf's cousin, J.K. Stephen (left)

It is clear, then, that there is a fundamental flaw in the theory that Jack the Ripper, for motives of occult ritual, was attempting to trace a bloody 'Calvary cross of seven points' across east London.

Some time after writing his *Confessions* Crowley seemed to have become aware of the true number of Ripper victims, for in an article entitled 'Jack the Ripper' he put forward a different hypothesis. The exact date at which this article was written is uncertain, for it was not published in Crowley's lifetime (although he attempted to sell it to several Sunday newspapers), and it did not appear in print until 1974, when it was included in the pages of *Sothis*, an occult periodical. It is probable that it was written somewhere about 1937, for it incorporates a sarcastic reference to an occult ceremony carried out 'some years ago' by the psychical researcher Harry Price. This incident took place in June 1932; it involved Price and Professor C. E. M. Joad in an attempt to turn a billy goat into a 'handsome young man' by the use of an allegedly medieval spell.

In 'Jack the Ripper' Crowley replaced his



Above left: the inability of the police to catch the Ripper soon became a popular joke, as in this *Punch* cartoon of 22 September 1888

Above: the occultist S.L. MacGregor Mathers, who claimed it was possible for people to make themselves invisible; his friend Aleister Crowley suggested that the Ripper might have done just this

seven-squared cross with a reverse pentagram. In other words, a five-pointed star with two of its points projecting upwards. Traditionally such a star is considered a sign of supreme spiritual evil, a symbol of the triumph of Satan over God.

But Crowley's pentagram seems as improbable as his cross. It is true, of course, that there were five murders, but if the sites of these are pin-pointed and marked on a London street map of the 1880s, it is impossible to draw lines linking them up into anything but the most ludicrous approximation to a reverse pentagram. Perhaps Jack the Ripper was a very poor geometer.

In both his *Confessions* and the later article Crowley stated that the same occult theorists who attributed black magic, human sacrifice and cannibalism to the Ripper also affirmed that after the second or third killing the sorcerer gained the power of making himself invisible – a first instalment of the 'supreme black magical power' for which he was striving.

Crowley never stated who first put forward this unbelievable theory, although he implied that it was an occultist who, at the time of the murders, wrote an evening newspaper article under the pen name of 'Tau Tria Delta'. If such an article did appear it was most unlikely that Crowley read it at the time of publication; in the autumn of 1888 Crowley was 13 years old and a pupil at a strict boarding school to which sensational papers gained no admittance.

The direct source of Crowley's knowledge of the 'invisibility theory' may have been S. L. MacGregor Mathers, Crowley's former friend and occult teacher, who was living in London at the time of the murders and certainly believed in both the power of black magic and the ability of occult adepts to make themselves invisible.

Mathers claimed to know at least one technique for the achievement of invisibility; he had been taught it, so he claimed, by the 'Secret Chiefs' – normally unseen supermen who occasionally manifested themselves to himself. On the basis of the teaching he believed he had received on the subject of invisibility and its attainment Mathers composed an instructional document, designed to be circulated among his occult pupils in manuscript, outlining a process by which an advanced adept could create:

> A Shroud of Darkness and of mystery which will encircle him so that he may become invisible, so that seeing him, men see him not, neither understand, but may see the thing that they see not, and comprehend not the thing that they behold.

This rather elaborate sentence seems to have meant that the adept does not become invisible in the sense that he or she is transparent, neither reflecting nor refracting light. What happens, it is implied, is that a veil of 'glamour' is thrown over the adept's body so that the onlooker takes him or her to be some other being or thing.

Crowley himself believed in the possibility of this kind of invisibility and experimented with rites designed to confer it. There is even a story – almost certainly apocryphal, alas – that, wearing exotic robes, a serpent crown upon his head, and bearing a magical staff in his hand, he one day walked from one end of the Café Royal to the other, taking the silence of the diners – who were probably too astonished to utter a word – as indubitable proof that they were unaware of his presence among them.

But Crowley not only believed that Jack the Ripper had occult motives. He thought he knew the killer's identity.

Was Jack the Ripper a woman – and a famous Theosophist? See page 2638

Below: Hanbury Street in London's East End, where Annie Chapman died in the back yard of No 29

Post script

Your letters to THE UNEXPLAINED

Dear Sir,
As a footnote to your article 'Countdown to the end' (issue 117) on the number 666 (the sign of the beast in the book of Revelation), it seems slightly ominous that the Ministry of Defence should allot this number as the postal reference for correspondence to persons serving in the Falkland Islands, that is BFPO 666.

I must admit that when I heard this announced on BBC television news during the crisis, I was quite horror-struck. Indeed, I was surprised that the Argentines did not pick this up and use it as propaganda declaring Mrs Thatcher as the Antichrist!

Yours faithfully,
J.P. Bannon London

Dear Sir,
I have just finished reading your article about tulpas in issue 85, and have some information that may be of interest to you.

Thomas Bearden, an aerospace engineer in Huntsville, Alabama, USA, believes that if people did not wake up when having terrible nightmares they would die. Dream monsters and other psychic hallucinations, he says, can acquire weight, volume and even a will of their own.

Bearden bases these statements on the fact that the human brain is full of electrically charged particles that are analogous to 'mind stuff'. As he puts it: 'When a person concentrates, this mind stuff condenses, getting thicker and thicker, until it becomes solid stuff, or real matter.'

Thus he believes that dream monsters may take on their own detached reality in a way that parallels the formation of tulpas through intense concentration, building the form bit by bit into its physical reality. Consequently, Bearden believes that the Tibetan yeti (or Abominable Snowman) is an example of a tulpa created by the inhabitants of a particular area in order to protect their sacred land.

Yours faithfully,
Mark Sheridan Auckland, New Zealand

Dear Sir,
I was extremely interested to read the series on Borley Rectory that began in issue 93, as I was a member of Denny Densham's investigative team that visited the church site a number of years ago.

M.D. Baker's letter (issue 118) referred to the strange atmosphere at Borley and the lack of 'natural' background noises. I, too, was very much aware of this. There do appear to be long periods of unnatural silence; it feels as though a blanket has been spread over the place, deadening all sound.

On one of my visits to Borley a colleague and I noticed strange wisps of a white fluffy substance that drifted down from the slate-grey sky. We caught a number of these wisps, which had the same kind of texture as candyfloss. Soon the church, trees and bushes were draped with the grey wisps, but they disintegrated rapidly before we had time to photograph this extraordinary scene.

At first we thought that the substance was some kind of industrial waste or foam that had blown across the site, but its peculiar consistency ruled this theory out. The substance stretched like chewing gum and was rather elastic. It was a strange experience handling the wisps while they rapidly shrank until they disappeared. The pieces varied in size from that of a fingernail to a large, clenched fist. It had no smell and neither marked nor affected the skin in any way. And then all the wisps vanished, almost as quickly as they had appeared; the whole incident lasted only two or three minutes. We were aware of a slight pressure in our ears during the period of silence that lasted about 10 minutes. Eventually the sky brightened, the atmosphere lifted and the birds began to sing again.

I wonder if these periods of silence could be due to the unusual behaviour of animals, as is said to occur before an earthquake? Are they alone aware of some kind of 'earth energy'?

In issue 118 an article entitled 'The fault of the Earth' suggested that megalithic sites in the west of England could be connected in some way with areas of seismic stress. I am not suggesting that Borley is about to 'erupt', merely that ley hunters believe that some churches were built on ancient holy sites and that this could well be the case at Borley. There are certain records that indicate there were standing stones in various parts of eastern England, though it is not yet known if there were any at Borley.

The underground tunnels at Borley suggest that the site has been worked for a long time. It certainly dates back to Saxon or Norman times, and there is no reason why it should not once have been used for pagan rites. If it could be proved beyond doubt that Borley was a megalithic site on a line of seismic stones, this could go a long way to explaining the paranormal events that so many people have witnessed there.

I personally believe there is some kind of energy force as yet unrecognised by science and that the incidents at Borley have physical causes. If sites with standing stones have fields of high energy (see the Dragon Project, issue 79), then a church building erected later on that site might also have them.

I understand that such sites usually have underground water. Borley certainly has its fair share, as recent dowsing tests have shown. Other groups of investigators have produced film evidence of infrared activity, which tends to suggest the presence of some kind of energy not yet fully understood.

Though the English landscape has radically altered over the years, it seems as though the site once provided a marvellous open view of the sky, in particular of sunrise and sunset, and that Borley is a possible source of alignments.

Undoubtedly the Celts had hill forts in the area and it is quite possible that they, like the ancient Chinese, used geomancy to locate the dwellings and tombs of their ancestors. These lines of force are similar to ley lines. While British archaeologists have thrown up their hands in horror at such ideas, many researchers have come up with promising results, and slowly more evidence is being accumulated to prove alignments between ancient sites.

Perhaps Borley will prove to be an old pagan site. If so, M.D. Baker is correct in suggesting that the church site holds the key to the secret of Borley.
(*Name and address supplied*)

Send *your* letters to THE UNEXPLAINED, Orbis House, 20–22 Bedfordbury, London WC2N 4BT

Some of the fascinating new series that will be starting soon in *The Unexplained*

Disasters and the stars
An Englishman claimed he could predict tempests, earthquakes and even riots in asylums from the positions of the heavenly bodies – and a whole nation was thrown into panic by his prophecies. **See issue 132**

Sex – sin or sacrament?
Many occultists have regarded sexual energy as a manifestation of the life force, capable of being transferred from young to old with rejuvenating effects. **See issue 133**

ET is alive and well
In March 1950, the Earth was allegedly infiltrated by six extra-terrestrial beings from Ummo, 14 light years away. Their extraordinary story begins in **issue 134**

PK and sympathy
A strange rapport seems to exist between a Swiss graphic designer and the metal objects he bends or breaks – *and* puts back together. His uncanny power is described in **issue 135**

Abduction in the night
Driving through desolate terrain Betty and Barney Hill saw a strange flying object. Later, under hypnosis, they told identical tales of being taken into a spacecraft and examined by aliens. But was it all a fantasy from Betty's subconscious? **See issue 136**

Voices from heaven or hell
Joan of Arc was burned at the stake for witchcraft and heresy, and canonised 500 years later. Was the Maid of Orléans really the daughter of God, as she claimed? The controversy surrounding her life – and her death – is examined in **issue 137**

An alleged craft from the planet Ummo; the Ummites, it is claimed, have been in contact with a select group on Earth since 1965

An eye to the future